

friends and allies, and our forces abroad, we continue operations in other areas around the globe. Our relationship with the Government and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) developed and matured throughout 2002. Last year's actions from February to July 2002 on Basilan Island, with AFP in command and with U.S. forces in a support role, helped to drive hundreds of Abu Sayyaf Group terrorists from the island, restoring order and reestablishing government services. To ensure that the AFP has the skills to fight terrorism over the long term, we have a robust security assistance training program and a variety of exercises that will provide the AFP much needed counter-terrorism training and equipment. There are approximately 300 combat-equipped and combat support U.S. military personnel working with the AFP and U.S. forces continue to plan with the AFP for possible future activities. Continued U.S. support is warranted as the Government of the Philippines has provided unwavering support in the global war on terrorism.

Additionally, we continue to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the Central and European Command areas of responsibility to prevent the movement, arming, or financing of international terrorists who pose a continuing threat to the United States.

Combat-equipped and combat support forces also have been deployed to Georgia and Yemen to assist the armed forces of those countries in enhancing their counter-terrorism capabilities, including by training and equipping their armed forces. Similar U.S. forces have deployed to Djibouti to command and control operations and other activities as necessary against al-Qaida and other international terrorists in the Horn of Africa region. These activities include providing oversight for urban and maritime counter-terrorism training with the Yemen special operations forces. We continue to assess options for working with other nations to assist them in this respect.

I have taken these actions pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. In addition, these actions are consistent with Public Law 107-40.

As I stated in my previous reports, it is not possible to know at this time either the duration of combat operations or the scope and duration of the deployment of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States. I will direct additional measures as necessary to exercise our right to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution and Public Law 107-40. Officials of my Administration and I have been communicating regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress, and we will continue to do so. I appreciate the continuing support of the Congress in our efforts to protect the security of the United States of America and its citizens, civilian and military, here and abroad.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Ted Stevens, President pro tempore of the Senate. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

March 21, 2003

The President. I've asked the Members of Congress to come up so that members of my administration can keep the leadership up to date as the war to liberate Iraq and to remove weapons of mass destruction out of Iraq proceeds. The military briefings, of course, will continue to be given out of the Pentagon. Secretary Rumsfeld will be briefing this afternoon.

I also really want to thank Members of Congress, both House Members, Senate Members, members of both political parties, for the strong resolutions that came off the floor of their respective bodies, resolutions

which said loud and clear: Our country supports the men and women in uniform; not only do we support those brave souls who are sacrificing on our behalf, but we want to thank their parents and their families for their dedication as well.

As Secretary Rumsfeld said, we're making progress. We will stay on task until we've achieved our objective, which is to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and free the Iraqi people so they can live in a society that is hopeful and democratic and at peace in its neighborhood.

All of us involved here in Washington are extremely proud of the skill and bravery of our young Americans who are willing to sacrifice for something greater than themselves.

So it's my honor to welcome the Members here. We will continue to keep them briefed as this war progresses. And I want to thank them for the unity, the message of unity.

Thank you all for coming.

Secretary Rumsfeld's Briefing

Q. Is Saddam dead or alive, sir?

The President. Secretary Rumsfeld will be briefing today.

Q. Do you want to give us any details, as the Commander in Chief, of how things are going?

The President. Secretary Rumsfeld will be briefing today.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:17 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of the Budget Resolution

March 21, 2003

As we engage in action to ensure freedom and security, it is imperative that we stay focused on important domestic priorities, including creating jobs and strengthening economic growth at home. With passage of the budget resolution, the House has spoken clearly that future economic growth and job creation requires passing the bold plan that I proposed. I commend the House for its timely action and look forward to working with Congress to ensure that we fund our

priorities, enact policies to spur growth, and restrain spending.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Reporting on the Commencement of Military Operations Against Iraq

March 21, 2003

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

On March 18, 2003, I made available to you, consistent with section 3(b) of the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), my determination that further diplomatic and other peaceful means alone will neither adequately protect the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq, nor lead to enforcement of all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq.

I have reluctantly concluded, along with other coalition leaders, that only the use of armed force will accomplish these objectives and restore international peace and security in the area. I have also determined that the use of armed force against Iraq is consistent with the United States and other countries continuing to take the necessary actions against international terrorists and terrorist organizations, including those nations, organizations, or persons who planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. United States objectives also support a transition to democracy in Iraq, as contemplated by the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-338).

Consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148), I now inform you that pursuant to my authority as Commander in Chief and consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1) and the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), I directed U.S. Armed Forces, operating with other coalition forces, to commence combat operations on March 19, 2003, against Iraq.